

## FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FISHING AREA 51  
(W. Indian Ocean)

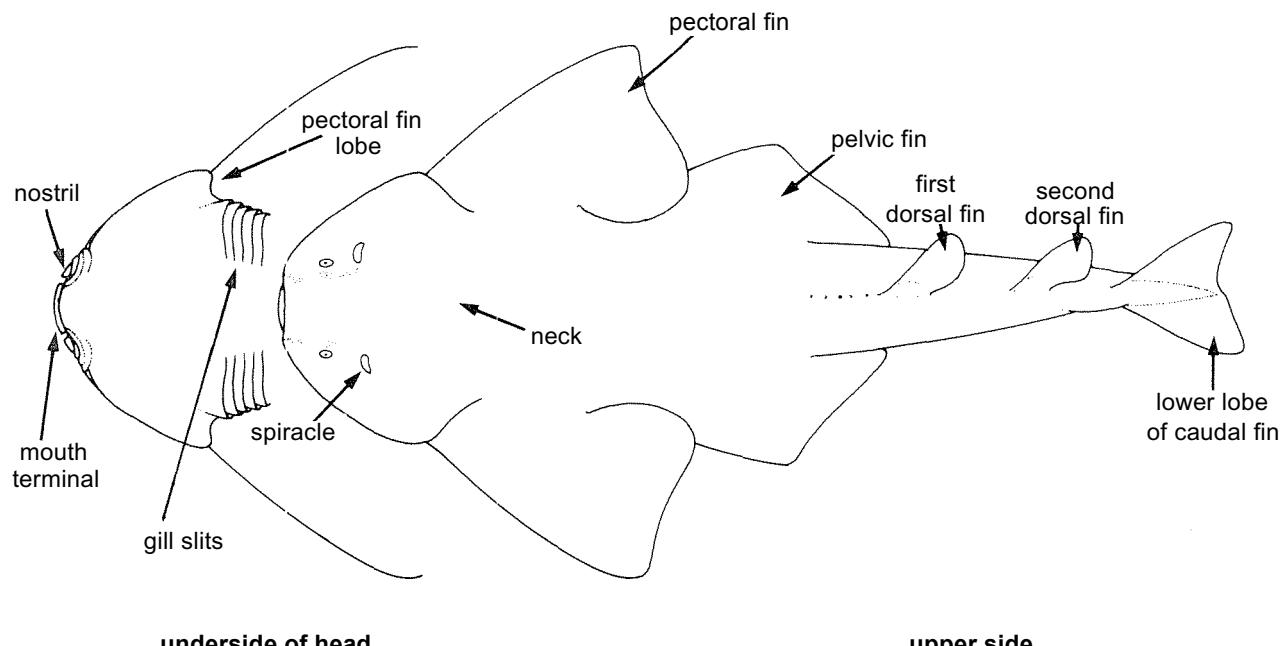
## SQUATINIDAE

## Angel sharks or sand devils

Moderately large, Flattened, raylike sharks. Head transversely oval or round, with a distinct neck at the pectoral fin bases; 5 pairs of moderately long gill slits situated ventrolaterally and not visible dorsally; no gill rakers; nostrils at tip of snout, with anterior flaps shaped as elaborate barbels; eyes on dorsal surface of head, without nictitating eyelids; mouth terminal, short and angular, extending under front of eyes when jaws are not protruded; teeth small, similar in both jaws, with a single, strong, needle-sharp cusp and no cusplets. Pectoral fins greatly enlarged, with a broad triangular lobe extending forward from their bases on either side of gill slits (but not fused to sides of head as in rays); pelvic fins enlarged and wing-like; 2 equally small, spineless dorsal fins located far rearward on tail, the first originating behind the pelvic fin bases; anal fin absent; caudal fin very short, nearly symmetrical but not lunate, its lower lobe slightly longer than the upper. Caudal peduncle moderately depressed, with a short, low, longitudinal keel on each side, but without precaudal pits. Intestine with an auger- or corkscrew-like spiral valve.

Colour: grey or brownish above, white below, with irregular darker markings or light ocelli.

Angel sharks are widely distributed and often abundant in cool temperate to tropical seas, ranging in depth from shallow inshore waters down to the upper continental slope. They are bottom-dwelling sharks, often burying themselves in sand or mud, and feed on small fishes and bottom invertebrates. Ordinarily harmless, but aggressive when provoked and capable of causing serious cuts with their small but needle-sharp teeth and strong jaws. Angel sharks are commonly caught in trawls but their use varies from region to region. Some are utilized for food and fishmeal; their skin makes good leather and shagreen for sanding wood.



**SIMILAR FAMILIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:**

The combination of characters underlined above readily distinguishes the angelsharks from all other shark families in the area.

Rays (Batoidea): pectoral fins fused to head over ventral gill slits, no neck at pectoral fin bases, usually a ventral mouth, and lower lobe of caudal fin (when present) much shorter than the upper.

**LIST OF SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:**

Code numbers are given for those species for which Identification Sheets are included

Squatina africana Regan, 1908

SQUAT Squat 5

\*Squatina sp.?

Prepared by L.J.V. Compagno, Tiburon Center for Environmental Studies, San Francisco State University, Tiburon, California, USA

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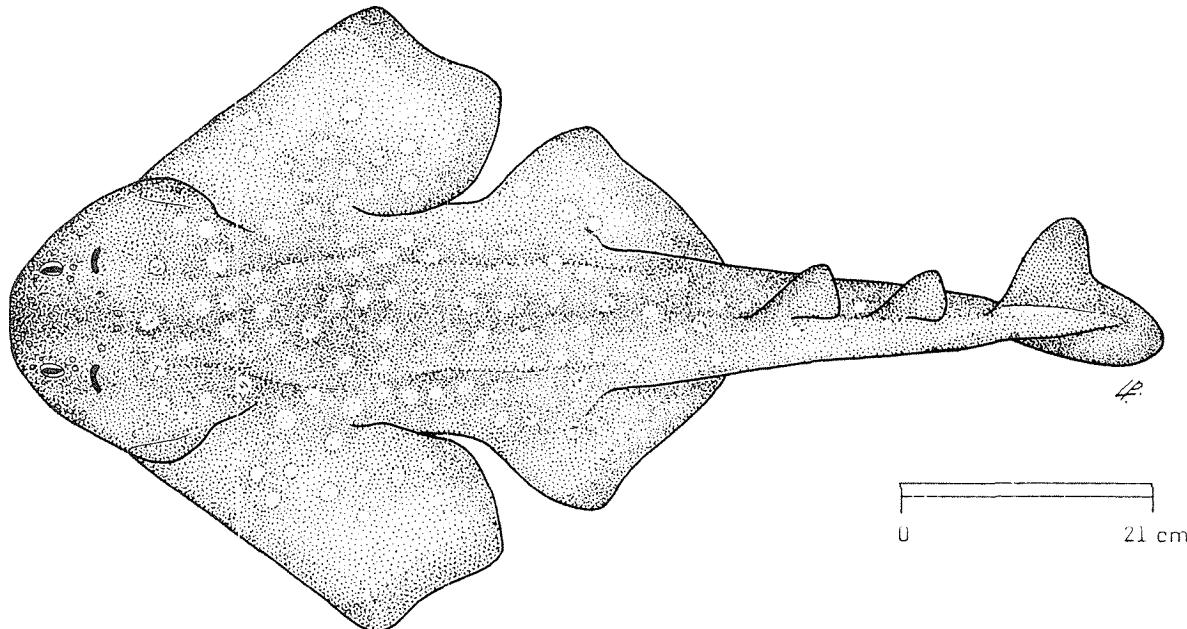
\* There is an old record of a Squatina from the Red Sea, listed as Squatina squatina (Linnaeus, 1758) but presumably not this Eastern North Atlantic and Mediterranean species. Recent records of Red Sea squatinids are not available

## FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: SQUATINIDAE

FISHING AREA 51  
(W. Indian Ocean)Squatina africana Regan, 1908

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



## VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO :           En - African angelshark  
                  Fr - Ange de mer africain  
                  Sp - Angelote africano

## NATIONAL:

## DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

A moderately large, flattened, raylike shark. Body greatly depressed and broad. Enlarged thorns or denticles present on head between eyes and spiracles and on nape, but none on midback. Head greatly depressed, nearly circular in dorsal view, with a distinct neck at pectoral fin origins; eyes moderately large, dorsal on head; 5 moderately long gill slits, ventrolaterally situated and concealed by the anterior pectoral fin lobes; spiracles very large; nostrils at tip of snout; nasal flaps not fringed, with a simple conical barbel; dermal folds on sides of head with a low triangular lobe opposite mouth corners; mouth terminal, short, extending below eyes; teeth in both jaws with a strong, short cusp and no cusplets; pectoral fins very large, angular, with a triangular anterior lobe; pelvic fins broad; first dorsal fin origin opposite or slightly posterior to free rear tips of pelvic fins; second dorsal fin about as large as first; anal fin absent; caudal fin short, nearly symmetrical, its lower lobe longer than the upper; caudal peduncle with a pair of short keels and a weak upper precaudal pit.

Colour: brown above, white below, back with a series of bold white spots marbled with brown.

## DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

The above characters of this species serve to distinguish S. africana from all other sharks and batoid fishes in the area, with the possible exception of other members of the genus Squatina (if any).

### SIZE:

Maximum: 108 cm.

### GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Virtually confined to the area. Ranges south to East London on the South African coast, but commonest off Natal, and also present off southern Mozambique.

A bottom-dwelling shark, ranging from the surfline and the intertidal zone to at least 430 m depth. Ovoviparous, number of developing ova 7 to 11 and litters of young at least 7; size at birth between 28 and 34 cm.

Feeds on small bony fish, squid and octopi. Probably harmless, except when stepped on or otherwise provoked.

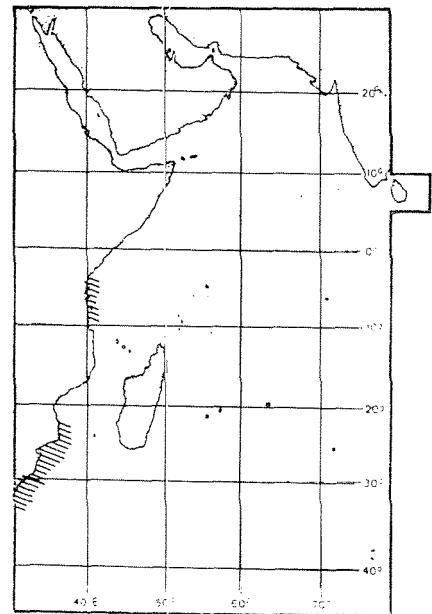
### PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

Natal and southern Mozambique.

### CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught in bottom trawls, apparently little utilized at present.



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FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FISHING AREA 51  
(W. Indian Ocean)

STEGOSTOMATIDAE

Zebra sharks

A single species in the area - see species sheet for:

Stegostoma fasciatum (Hermann, 1783) STEG Steg 1

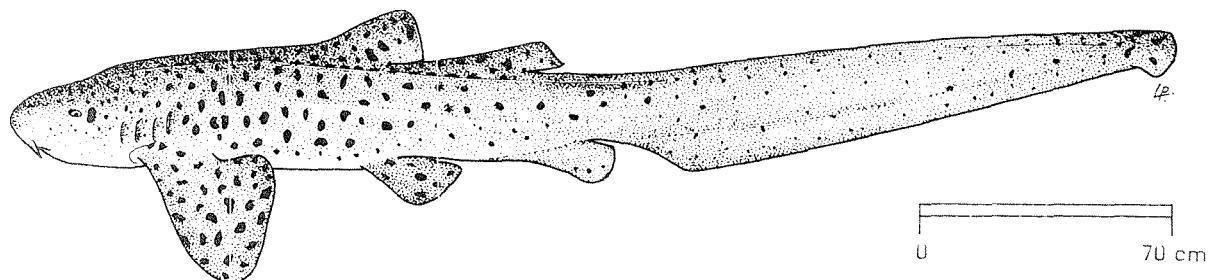
## FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY : STEGOSTOMATIDAE

FISHING AREA 51  
(W. Indian Ocean)

Stegostoma fasciatum (Hermann, 1783)

## OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE:

Stegostoma varium (Seba, 1758)Stegostoma tygrinus or tigrinus (Bonnaterre, 1788)

## VERNACULAR NAMES:

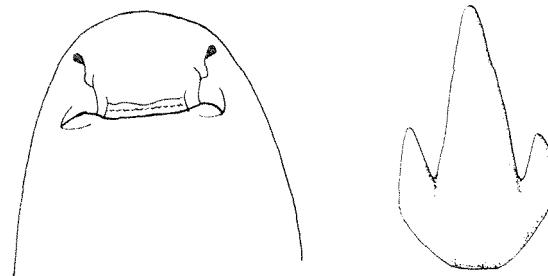
FAO : En - Zebra shark  
 Fr - Requin zèbre  
 Sp - Tiburón acebrado

NATIONAL:

## DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

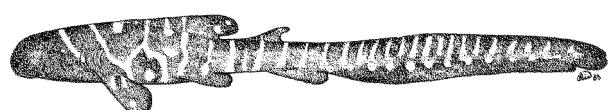
A large shark. Head with 5 small slits, the last 3 behind pectoral fin origin and the last 2 very close to each other; no gillrakers; nostrils close to front of snout, with short barbels and nasoral grooves connecting them with the mouth but without circumnasial grooves; no nictitating lower eyelids; snout very short, broad and bluntly rounded; mouth short, nearly transverse, and far forward on head, well in front of eyes; teeth small, poorly differentiated in different regions of the mouth, with moderately long medial cusps and short cusplets on sides. Two dorsal fins, the base of the first extending forward of pelvic fin origins as a low keel that reaches level of pectoral fin bases but with insertion posterior to pelvic fin origins; second dorsal fin half the size of first or less; anal fin present, rounded but not keel-shaped, with its origin under rear third of second dorsal fin base; caudal fin nearly or quite half of total length, strongly asymmetrical, with a deep subterminal notch but with the lower lobe hardly developed. Caudal peduncle not strongly depressed, without lateral keels or precaudal pits, but with dermal ridges extending forward onto sides. Intestinal valve of ring type.

Colour: a strongly marked colour pattern, changing with growth. Young below 60 cm have the back dark brown or blackish, with vertical yellow bars, spots and reticulations, and the underside of the head, abdomen and tail whitish, but in subadults and adults the dark areas break up into scattered dark spots on a yellowish background, shading into the whitish ventral surface.



underside of head

lower tooth



young

## DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

The barbels, nasoral grooves, anterior mouth, teeth, anteriorly elongated dorsal fin, lateral ridges on the sides, greatly elongated caudal fin about half the total length, and distinctive colour patterns of young and adults separate this shark from all others in the area.

### SIZE:

Maximum: possible 354 cm, most adults smaller.

### GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

In the area, wide-ranging from South Africa and Madagascar to the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, the "Gulf", and coasts of Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, as well as Mauritius. Elsewhere in the Eastern Indian Ocean and Western Pacific eastward to Japan, Australia and Palau.

A common inshore shark, often found on coral reefs, on or near the bottom. Oviparous, depositing eggs in rounded, oblong egg cases 10 to 17 cm long. Size of young at hatching between 20 and 36 cm.

Feeds primarily on molluscs but also takes small fishes.

### PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka.

### CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught in bottom trawls, in floating and fixed bottom gillnets, and with longlines.

Utilized fresh and dried-salted for human consumption; livers are processed for vitamins; fins dried for the oriental sharkfin trade; also processed for fishmeal.

